DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 178 637 UD 019 862

AUTHOR Aguon, Katherine B.
TITLE The Guam Dilemma: The Need for a Pacific Island Educational Perspective.
PUB DATE Apr 79
NOTE 12p.; Paper presented at the National Association for Asian American and Pacific Education Conference (San Francisco, California, April 25-27, 1979)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Chamorro; Cultural Differences; Cultural Pluralism; *Culture Conflict; Educational History; *Educational Policy; Educational Theories; Elementary Secondary Education; *Ethnicity; *Foreign Policy; Immigrants; Multicultural Education; *Non Western Civilization; Social Change; Social Differences; *Social Environment
IDENTIFIERS *Guam

ABSTRACT

This paper analyzes the cultural and social changes which have occurred in Guam since World War II and discusses their implications for education. The massive increase in the number of American troops, the expansion of military installations, the importation of alien labor, the emphasis on a stateside style of education, and the development of a multi-ethnic population are all seen as having had a negative impact on the cultural identity of the island's inhabitants. The author concludes that even the current trend toward cultural pluralism in Guam's educational system is an American philosophy and not applicable to Guam's unique social situation. (EB)

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ED178637

OCT 15 1979

THE GUAM DILEMMA:

THE NEED FOR A PACIFIC ISLAND EDUCATIONAL PERSPECTIVE

Katherine B. Aguon
Senator, 14th Guam Legislature
Agana, Guam

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This paper was presented at the April 1979 National Association of Asian American and Pacific Education Conference which was in part supported by funds from the National Institute of Education. However, the views expressed herein do not necessarily represent the policy or position of either NIE or NAAAPE; and endorsement of the paper by either organization should not be inferred.

The Guam Dilemma:

the Need For a Pacific Island Educational Perspective

Katherine B. Aguon
Senator, 14th Guam Legislature
Agana, Guam

The people of Guam currently face a series of educational challenges which is rich in its complexity and replete with lessons for all who consider themselves as belonging to a group loosely called Asian and Pacific Americans. Guam is but a small island and its superficial image is that of a military base whose landscape is dotted with civilians and a handful of native Pacific Islanders. Its population is approximately 115,000, but its strategic importance and role in the military posture of the U.S. usually dwarfs any consideration of this small island and relatively small population as having useful lessons for American educators.

Nothing could be further from the reality of Guam's educational situation. Indeed, Guam may be small but by the nature of its past development and present economic and social situations, the island offers to all Americans, as well as Pacific Islanders, many lessons. In many respects, Guam is a microcosm of the best and the worst that industrial society has to offer to a Pacific Island. Historically, it was the first Pacific Island to experience Western colonialism. It suffered through Western diseases, weapons and religion before reaching a new cultural equilibrium. Subsequent to that, it came under U.S. naval administration for nearly 50 years and had a devastating war in the process which created an ever-expanding military role for the island. After World War II, the tiny island had the effects of the Industrial Revolution thrust upon it in short, but rapid doses. Politically, it became a territory of the U.S., the people U.S. citizens, and the schools totally "American" in orientation. In more recent times, U.S. immigration laws, economic expansion for its own sake and the importation of alien laborers have created a complicated society with population, social and ethnic pressures. The nature of Guam society, which we thought had

changed rapidly enough in the early post-World War II years, has reached such a rate of change that shifts in cultural and social characteristics can be easily charted.

This makes my island both an exciting and depressing place of residence. You cannot help but get the feeling that you are riding a wild stallion. For myself and a few others, it is an exhilarating feeling that we are participating in managing a society which offers challenges unlimited in scope and unparalleled in possiblilities. However, for far too many, the situation merely offers an opportunity to be a bronco-buster without the requisite skills, equipment or knowledge about horses. For the original inhabitants of Guam, the Chamorros, this is painfully true. They have undergone such rapid cultural change and have such an extended history of cultural abuse that they do not view their heritage as theirs nor is it accepted as valuable. Similar to what happened to the Hawaiian, the native islander is sinking slowly into a new world which has no meaning or room for him. He is ill-equipped to meet it head-on and submits to arguments that what he formerly was has no relevance to the new order.

As an educator, I find this to be a complex situation difficult to untangle. As a Pacific Islander, I find that imported solutions and orientations can easily make the situation worse rather than alleviate it. What I propose to illustrate for you is how this problem developed, its current dimensions and possible solutions in the form of education that makes economic, cultural and social sense. What I hope will result is your appreciation of the necessity for Pacific Islanders to assert themselves on their own terms and to exercise independent thought.

The Problem Develops

Education in the broad definition of the term as preparation for life's activities has always existed among the people of Guam. From the time of the ancient Chamorros, with their complicated kinship systems and sharp divisions of labor, to the era of the technological imperative and all its attendance gadgetry, the people of Guam have attempted to develop in the youth of the island the skills necessary to deal with the various challenges intrinsic in life. Unfortunately during much of the island's recent history, the school and the home did not have a mutually rewarding relationship. The school decided upon what was necessary for life and the island's future and the home invariably acceded to the demands of the system.

The Chamorro educational process as enculturation emphasized the value of interdependence, respect for nature, the supremacy of familial obligations, respect for nature, the supremacy of familial obligations, respect for old age and respect for social position. The Chamorro response to individuality and the "do your own thing ethic" would be (and still is in many respects) that it is fine for immature adolescents, but certainly inappropriate for a mature adult. While individual responsibility existed, the need for individuality was deemed insignificant when compared to social and familial obligations. These cultural perceptions of what constitute common sense in social organization and interpersonal relationships have been constant despite the long colonial history of the island. When we speak of cultural continuity and cultural values, these are what we should speak of. Only in the present generation have these values been deemed inappropriate by large numbers of people. To be sure, colonial officials and much of the island's elite formerly criticized them, but their criticisms went unheeded by the common man.

The arrival of the Spaniards on the island also brought with it the first imposition of educational values and the development, although somewhat limited, of a formal school system as understood in the West. The first Spanish settlement was established on the island in 1668, 157 years after Magellan first touched on the island. The Spaniards came for two reasons: 1) to christianize the Chamorros, and 2) to secure a port for passing ships in the lucrative Manila-Acapulco route of the Manila galleon trade. Within these purposes, the Spaniards set out to alter the Chamorro way of life considerably.

Under the leadership of zealous missionaries, the Spaniards endeavored to "educate" the Chamorros so that they would be more inclined to agriculture and would be able to read the word of God. Consequently, the first formal school was established by the missionaries. This school was meant initially for the elite young men of the island. A section was later added for the benefit of young women.

The educational mission of the priests was made considerably easier by the soldiers who in a period of 25 years had managed to decimate nearly 90% of the island's original population by cruel warfare and the introduction of diseases to a population that had not built up any natural immunities. By 1760, the population of the Marianas had dwindled to less than 2,000.

The priests were responsible for all forms of formal education which was limited to instruction in agriculture and the barest essentials of literacy, primarily for church use. Since Chamorro remained the language of the people, reading and writing was taught in that language much to the credit of the Spanish priests who insisted on this right up until their expulsion in the 1930's by the U.S. Naval Government of Guam. Spanish was taught to the elite of the island or those who wished to work for the government. The elite was based on inter-marriage with the Spaniards, residency in Agana and naturally, wealth.
wealth.

Occasionally, there were Spanish governors who took an interest in vocational education beyond a few agricultural techniques. However, for most of the time, education like the entire Spanish government, was in a state of stagnant disarray.

By the time of the arrival of the Americans in 1898, many persons from Guam had excelled in education elsewhere, but this was the result of individual effort rather than a system-wide push. Estimates place the literacy rate for Chamorros in 1898 at 50% in Spanish and 75% in Chamorro.

Despite this meager effort at formal education, the people on the island still managed to educate themselves at home and at the ranch. Their continuity as Pacific Islanders continued. They maintained their language and values, but their lifestyle had changed. Rather than relying on the ocean and a few root crops for sustenance, they incorporated farming as introduced by Mexicans and Filipinos. However, despite their cultural integrity which American anthropologists would later recognize, the Chamorros had adopted a colonial view of themselves which was damaging.

Years of oppression created a feeling among the people that they were culturally inferior or culturally non-existent. The Chamorros, as a result of their christianization, were told they were no longer uncivilized as in former days. Moreover, as a result of inter-marriage they were led to believe they were not Chamorros anymore. Yet they were not Spainards, Filipinos or Mexicans. Consequently, Chamorro self-image was determined by the colonizers and it was indeed a confused one.

The United States acquired Guam as a result of the Spanish-American War in1898. The U.S., having little previous experience in colonial ventures, turned the responsiblility for managing the island over to the U.S. Navy. Through naval officials stationed on the island, the people were governed and educated for the next forty years. During this critical time period of the island's history, the Chamorro was introduced to America, its patriotic symbols and compulsory education. The policies of these naval officials towards the people left a legacy of self-doubt and self-denial which we still face today.

The characteristics and the results of this legacy are easy to identify, but difficult to deal with. The equating of education and Americanization was its most pervasive characteristic. It wasn't in the nature of a decision to Americanize the people, but rather an assumption that real education could take place only in an American context. Comparing Guam's citizens to immigrants, the *Guam Recorder* (a Navy publication) in 1925 reported:

> "The Public School System of the United States is one of the greatest institutions of the world. The people of Guam need the same advantages that are enjoyed by Americans, and the great hordes of immigrants who enter the country."

Under the rubric of progress, officials argued for a curriculum of American history, English (to the exclusion of Chamorro), health and vocational skills. However, the two most prevalent characteristics of schooling under the Navy were its patriotic exercises and emphasis on English language. The island was operated as if it were a naval base with a crew of 20,000 civilians.

The emphasis on English was more than most of us today imbued with a respect for humanity could probably bear. Unlike the Spaniards who offered their language as a vehicle for wider communication, the Navy offered English as a substitute for Chamorro as a home language. Frequently, governor reports to the Secretary of the Navy measured educational progress not in terms of English acquisition, but of how little Chamorro was being used in some homes.

This preoccupation with English can be seen in many official statements of education officials during the naval period. In one 1925 statement, the officials advised the public:

> "All of the older people and parents who speak English ought to speak it to the children habitually."

For those who continued to doubt the utility of English, naval officials reported:

> "English will bring to the people of Guam, through the public schools, a knowledge of sanitation and hygiene, which will enable them to live in a correct manner. This will result still more favorably in the increase in population. Along with such increase will come further and enforced economic development. With economic development will come more of the real pleasures of life. Through English will come a knowledge of fair play and keen sense of honor such as the progenitors of Americans had at the time of the origin of the language and such as is practiced by the American nation at the present time. With a knowledge of English under American tutorship will come a natural love for labor and industry by those who even come to think themselves educated. A knowledge of theoretical as practical agriculture is opened to all, and through English under the present order of things, if continued, Guam should become one of the gardenpots of the world."

English was actually going to make us more sanitary and be fairer in our dealings with others.

In terms of curriculum, the schools were rather unimaginative. In 1922, they adopted in toto the state curricula of California and New Mexico. The course of study included nothing abut Guam and unless one opened the windows and felt the tropical climate a student felt like he was in California. Unfortunately, the same situation is common in many of Guam's classrooms today.

The lone exception to this unfortunate curricula trend was the pre-war navy's emphasis on agricultural and vocational training in the upper school levels. Skills in the areas of farming, carpentry, use of natural materials, net-making were regularly imparted in the island's schools. It must be remembered that secondary schools existed in Guam only in the 30's and that such training was limited in scope, but a rather pleasant surprise in an historical review of the island's schools.

The most damaging effect of education during this time period was not the direct cultural abuse endured or the political rights ignored. Rather, it lies in the internalization of the navy's image of Chamorros by Chamorros themselves. They were told for so long that they were lazy, incompetent and belonged to a primitive reality that they eventually accepted it. Chamorros eventually become their own worse enemy in terms of self-concept.

Largely through the vehicle of schooling, Chamorros had accepted their status as children in need of guidance. The creation of dependence, the loss of self-worth and reliance on American largesse were all part of the American educational scene.

In the post-World War II era there were many dramatic shifts which had countless implications for educators. Guam, as a result of the war and the Cold War which followed it, became in a very literal sense a supermarket for the military. Within one year of the arrival of American troops on July 21, 1944, over 21 military installations were built. To serve the troops which were stationed or passed through Guam in 1945, 105 movie theatres were built which had a joint seating capacity of 132,000. Guam's military role expanded and would soon permeate its social reality from place names to everyday speech. The civilian population of 25,000 was dwarfed by the military population of 68,000 in 1948. The civilians did not comprise a majority of the populace until the 1960 census. Moreover, with the construction of military bases, thousands of alien laborers (4,500 in 1948) were brought in, local manpower resources were ignored. These alien workers became a permanent fixture in Guam's society and served as a painful reminder or how an unresponsive school system and federal-military policies could deny thousands of young citizens gainful employment in their own homeland.

The expansion of the military presence on Guam also introduced the military dependent into the school system. Their presence in the educational structure stepped up demands for a more stateside style of education.

Combined with increased enrollments, the next educational change was the importation of the contract teacher from the U.S. By 1950, 1/3 of the teachers on Guam were contracted from the states and by the mid-50's, contract-teaching was a permanent feature of education in its operations and expense.

It is difficult to gauge adequately what the impact of contract teaching meant on Guam. By 1965, contract teachers numbered over 500 and in many respects they constituted a separate cultural group. They lived in separate housing and sponsored each other as new teachers were brought to the island. Their circle of friends, social groupings and non-school life were generally within this new cultural group on the island. They eventually provided much of the impetus in forming a teachers union which was affiliated with the American Federation of Teachers. Almost all teachers are now "local" in that those formerly on contract were "forced" to forfeit their status by Government of Guam pressures.

The postwar school system also dropped any emphasis on vocational education. Imbued with the new spirit of K-12 education for all citizens, educational planners shortsightedly assumed this meant the pursuit of academics. Moreover it was the pursuit of academics that the people thought American schools were all about. This idea was reinforced by the people's assumption that becoming U.S. citizens meant a cultural break with the past. No one questioned the curriculum despite its obvious lack of connection to Guam's heritage or economic needs. The people self-consciously avoided connection with the past and even adopted the name Guamanian as symbolic of their new status.

References to Chamorro identity and culture were in the nature of embarrassed admissions about a primitive past. Families who viewed themselves as members of the elite adopted English as their home language. By the late 60's , children learned Chamorro only by listening to adults. The long line of direct enculturation in the home had been effectively mangled. The fruition of navy policies had been delayed, but eventually had come to pass.

This pattern in Guam's society was relatively undistrubed until the mid and late 60's. Guam had adopted a K-12 academics-oriented plan of education. Schools were staffed largely by contract teachers. The people had become American citizens, but had confused political with cultural identity. There was some cultural erosion particularly in language, but the home still provided some support for cultural continuity. The island had yet to enter a period of rapid change.

The military lifted its security clearance in 1963 and as a consequence opened up the island to immigration within U.S. law and unfettered travel from the U.S. The full weight of this measure was not felt until the island entered an economic boom period in the late 60's. The immigration law changes which occurred in 1965 applied to Guam for the first time and opened the island to large scale immigration from non-military sources.

As a result of new leadership and ideas, Guam attempted to build an economic base built on tourism, foreign investment and public work projects. This required new skills and offered the island many new challenges, both economic and cultural.

The island witnessed the development of a multi-ethnic population that features Chamorros, Filipinos, Haoles or statesiders, and an increasing Asian presence with Chinese, Japanese and Korean students. In terms of absolute numbers, the Chamorro population has dropped since 1976. Their percentage of the total school enrollment has dropped accordingly. All other groups have gone up steadily in recent years. In absolute numbers, the Filipinos have had the most rapid growth, having had a 600% total increase in population since 1960.

In economic terms the Chamorros either are in high management positions or in unskilled positions. There are not too many of them in the private sector of the economy. Asians, Filipinos and statesiders dominate small businesses, construction jobs and managerial positions in the private sector respectively. In social programs, Chamorros dominate welfare programs, low cost housing programs, food stamp efforts, programs for the mentally retarded and 75% of Brodie School enrollment, despite the fact that they comprise 55% of the total enrollment in schools. Brodie School is Guam's school for the mentally retarded and physically handicapped. Chamorros also disproportionately occupy the enrollment at the island's correctional facility.

Obviously, there is something amiss in this entire situation. The island has had tremendous economic development, but for whom? New housing developments for the wealthy have only a small number of Chamorro residents. The youth share a disproportionate amount of drug abuse and problems. The more talented among the young islanders frequently leave and never come back. Recent estimates place 20,000 - 40,000 Chamorros living on the U.S. West Coast. We are faced with an economic structure we are not in control of and an educational system based almost entirely on imported models.

This not to say that this situation is unique to Guam. Its dimensions are easy to generalize to other Pacific areas. If they don't have Guam's dilemma yet, they soon will. The interest in the Pacific region for nations, corporations, and educational institutions is growing geometrically as industrial societies look for new curiosities or resources to maintain their life as they know it. In response, Pacific Islanders are doomed to ignore their own life as they know it and adopt new ones of which they only have a superficial understanding.

These twin educational problems of cultural and economic survival are certainly not new. They are the very essence of life in every society throughout history. However, it is the Pacific Islander who is now succumbing to this apparent conflict in clear and self-evident terms.

Guam has long recognized the problem, but solutions have only been imperfectly developed. To some extent, the economic needs of the island were recognized in Guam in the 50's, but more as a response to what was occurring in the U.S. than local conditions. In other words, if American schools were going to emphasize vocational skills, so would Guam schools. Consequently, the Guam Vocational-Technical High School was established in 1959 with an enrollment of 41 (29 in automotive trades and 12 in electricity).

From this inauspicious beginning, the school eventually evolved into the Guam Community College of 1977, but only as a result of some very complex manuevers involving the University of Guam, the Guam Legislature and the Department of Education.

On the cultural scale, the Guam educational system has done little for many of the ethnic groups that enrich the island, but has made some attempts at Chamorro language and culture education. The system has received funds for two Title VII, ESEA bilingual projects with Chamorro as the language focus. Although they operate relatively well, they only affect 2-3% of the total school enrollment. A more widespread attempt at Chamorizing education on Guam has been the Chamorro Language and Culture Program which is funded through Title VII, ESAA. This program affects roughly 10% of the total student enrollment and is limited to the 4th, 5th, and 6th grades.

The most disturbing feature of these programs is not their limited impact, but rather the reality that they originated elsewhere. The only groundswell for support of such programs came as a result of contact with school districts in the U.S. who were doing similar things. In other words, even as we sought to affirm ourselves as Pacific Islanders in our schools, we recognize that the local government would not fund such a venture. We also recognized that the scope of our plans for Chamorizing education was not set locally, but determined by the pressure of ethnic groups in the U.S. We soon found ourselves arguing for treatment from our own educational system as if we were a recently arrived minority ethnic group. In short, we adopted the cultural pluralist argument and didn't care to adjust it to meet local conditions or even develop our own unique rationale.

It is in this cultural pluralist rhetoric that the Pacific Islander in his homeland may be trapped.

It is nearly mandatory for federally-funded education projects to address their needs within the cultural pluralist philosophy. Bilingual education, special education and teacher training programs speak in terms of respect for the cultural backgrounds of the children, the need for cultural awareness and the desire for cultural diversity. They now emphasize that culturally different children must not be looked upon as deficient Americans, but as a national resource which must be protected and developed.

In order to evaluate the validity of these assertions, we must carefully measure the total impact of pluralism on a sense of identity, a sense of peoplehood and a sense of managing the future.To do otherwise is to perpetuate the unfortunate assumption that every philosophy and educational trend developed in America is exportable to Guam.

The most significant aspect of cultural pluralism is that it is a uniquely American philosophy in response to particular American realities and situations. Pluralism is defined in terms that only an American can truly understand. In many basic ways, this philosophy points up the dilemma of both pluralism's and America's promise and tragedy. Stated simply, cultural pluralism maintains that having an ethnic identity is not incompatible with being an American. It says that continuing a language, a culture and a sense of ethnicity is within the normal American experience and should be encouraged and developed. For too long, pluralists argue, culturally different individuals have been made to feel abnormal and, even un-American. All Americans have rights and the desire to live differently and maintain a language is certainly not to be denied by other Americans who feel that Americans speak only English and behave only in certain ways.

Cultural pluralism is important in American society today because it allows the immigrant-ethnic and other minority groups a sense of security which they have previously been denied in American society. It gives them a chance to cope with the larger American society in a way that does not threaten their entire existence as a people. It is a humane philosophy which was born out of some very de-humanizing experiences.

Pluralism has two characteristics which make its applicability to Guam suspect. Cultural puralists, in general, address themselves to minority groups who are in danger of cultural assimilation. They assume that there is a dominant culture and that this is an expression of the will of the majority of the nation. This dominate culture, frequently unaware of its intolerance, systematically exterminates the cultural expression of smaller groups. Pluralists maintain this is not only morally bankrupt, but wasteful of human resources. Secondly, pluralists frequently speak in terms of the immigrant experience. Immigrant groups are generally eager to accept American ways and by the fact that they have left their homeland, have lost some claim on it. American society may alter them, but must also recognize their human dignity as people with a distinct and valuable heritage. On Guam, the situation is not analogous. We have a majority group (in numbers) who are in danger of cultural extinction rather than threatening others. Moreover, this group must now argue in cultural pluralist terms so that they may achieve immigrant-minority status in order to protect themselves. For this majority group, which is native-born, to seek immigrant status so that they may maintain their dignity as a people defies human logic. Clearly, cultural pluralism on Guam seems to provide only inadequate and partial answers to the cultural problems of the present.

Guam's unique social situation leads us to recognize that much of the cultural pluralist rhetoric does not fit. The terms melting-pot and multicultural are used frequently and loosely to express a certain reality about what Guam is today. Closer examination of the situation yields a very different picture.

To the superficial Guam observer, multi-cultural society is visually alive and exciting. Guam is not a melting-pot in the sense that various cultural groups contribute to the basic structure of Guam's society. Quite to the contrary, these groups must conform to some very basic cultural patterns upon which Guam society is based. The visual reality that these groups set up – restaurants, selling their homeland's products, and celebrating their traditional holidays – does not in any way mean that the tenets and the assumptions which underlie Guam's schools, government institutions, mass media and religious structure are significantly altered. These groups are merely being allowed the opportunity to do with their free time what they will. The island's institutions only allows for an indulgent, rather than an affirmative multi-cultural society. When it comes to serious activity, such as attending school or going to work, all groups realize that they must conform to established patterns or they will not succeed in these areas. Yet, the island is often described as some sort of multi-cultural paradise, even as the culture of only one of the groups dominates every institution on Guam – that of the minority statesiders.

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